

GREAT MEADOWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
MONTHLY NARRATIVE: MARCH 1993

A. HIGHLIGHTS

B. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

Climatic conditions in March were wintery for much of the month, with precipitation in the form of rain and snow prominent. Forty inches of snow were recorded this month bringing the winter 92-93 total to 93 inches. Two storms provided 26 inches, 15 inches on the 13th and 11 inches on the 24th. Melting snow and accompanying 1 1/2 inches of rain during the last week created rising water levels along the Sudbury and Concord rivers. These rivers crested during the first few days of April creating numerous road closures and detours near the refuge. Temperatures were slightly below normal for the month, held down by the snow cover which was present through most of March.

D. PLANNING

6. Other

E. ADMINISTRATION

1. Personnel

3/29- 4/2- Manager Moses and ROS Frisque attend first session of the L.E. Refresher at Patuxent.

3/11- Work on the Concord restroom renovation began in March. The contractor has completed plumbing and electrical work by months end but formal approval from the project engineer has not been given. No work on the doors, partitions, or driveway has been completed.

3/12- Community service volunteer, Chris Buckley, finished his required public service work at GRM. Chris was involved with a considerable amount of boundary posting, snow removal and other tasks to assist the station. Chris provided a total of 64 hours of service.

3/23- ROS Frisque attends meeting of the Local Emergency Response Committee.

4. Volunteer Program

On-going volunteer projects in March included fish tank maintenance and Heard Pond trail inspection and maintenance.

6. Safety

A station safety meeting was given on March 29. The topic involved proper use and maintenance of power mowers.

F. HABITAT MANAGEMENT

2. Wetlands

The Concord impoundments as well as both the Sudbury and Concord rivers remained relatively ice covered through the month. Ice remained on the impoundments until the end of the month but moved off the rivers for only the last week, nearly three full weeks later than normal. Numerous small "pothole" marshes on the refuge were full at the end of the month due to snow melt and flooding conditions.

G. WILDLIFE

2. Endangered and/or Threatened Species

3. Waterfowl

Waterfowl migration was somewhat delayed due to ice cover. The Sudbury and Concord rivers were open during the second half of the month, providing the only open water in the immediate vicinity. Waterfowl numbers were relatively low the first two weeks with less than 100 birds recorded on the Sudbury river and impoundments. A greater number and variety of waterfowl were observed during the later portion of the month, 500-600 birds were observed the week of March 22, including mallards, blacks, ringneck duck, wood ducks common goldeneye, and c. mergansers comprising the majority of species. During the last week of the month waterfowl numbers continued to rise to over 1000 birds of nearly the same species composition as a week earlier, however, mallards and black ducks showed continuing increases as goldeneyes and common mergs. declined.

4. Marsh and Water Birds

The first great blue herons were observed during the week of March 22. Their numbers continued to rise through the end of the month.

6. Raptors

Hawks, primarily redtailed and red shouldered were observed numerous times during the month. A red phase screech owl was observed using a tree cavity at the Concord unit parking area.

7. Other Migratory Birds

Male redwinged blackbirds were observed on March 7 for the first time.

A tree swallow was observed on March 15.

A turkey vulture was observed over the Sudbury river on March 10.

Bluebirds were seen on birdhouses at various locations on the refuge in March we are hopeful some will become summer residents. An Eastern phoebe was observed at the Strand property on the 30th.

10. Other Resident Species

H. PUBLIC USE

1. General

Region 5 Assistant Public Use Specialist Bevilacqua visited the Refuge on March 23. ORP Kennedy provided a tour and orientation, and discussed the public use program.

There was one business meeting attended by 8 people in the auditorium in March.

2. Outdoor Classrooms - Students

There were no school or scout visits in March.

ORP Kennedy attended a planning session on March 2, sponsored by Minute Man NHP regarding a multi-agency collaboration on the development of a Teachers Guide to the Concord Area. Representatives of various historic sites in Concord and Lexington, and Walden Pond State Reservation also attended.

6. Interpretive Exhibits/Demonstrations

ORP Kennedy presented an off-site interpretive program at Northwest Child Development Center on March 26. Her talk included discussion of owls and conservation of resources. Approximately 22 children attended.

7. Other Interpretive Programs

The Sudbury Valley Trustees sponsored an Owl Prowl slide show

and walk on the evening of March 19. Approximately 30 people attended. Several screech owls were observed.

18. Cooperating Associations

ORP Kennedy met with the SuAsCo board on March 9 regarding the bookstore operations and the upcoming Rivers Night in June.

ORP Kennedy attended a Friends of Monomoy meeting at Monomoy on March 11.

I. EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

2. Rehabilitation

Initial construction of the handicapped bridges for spanning the spillways at the Concord impoundments was completed in March. Ten foot sections were constructed and stored at the log cabin. These sections will be fastened together in 40 ft. spans with slopes appropriate for wheelchair access. The spans will be secured using "sand screws" into the dike surface and slopes.

The floating river information signs were rennovated after being charred and discolored in the Strand barn fire in 1992. Minor repairs were effected so the signs could be used in the fall of 1992. Any remaining work was completed in March.

The station tractor auger was finished after parts and intial work was completed in Feb.

The bucket for the tractor was removed and delivered to Cavalier for repairs. The bottom plate was replaced and welded, numerous small breaks were welded on other portions of the bucket as well. "Scraping guides" were installed on the bottom of the bucket to protect it from undue wear, and lifting hooks were installed on the top and sides as well.

3. Major Maintenance

4. Equipment Utilization and Replacement

The dump truck, trailer and dozer were returned from SBM in March. Unfortunately, numerous dents, scrapes and scratches were also returned on the truck. The dump truck was scheduled for repairs in April.

Four portable radios were sent to All-Comm for battery replacement and crystal replacement. Two radios required FWS band crystals to replace high band frequency crystals. The high band frequency was a Harvard P.D. frequency and was not used by the staff. The retrofitting of these units provides additional portable radios for a variety of staff uses.

New chain saw chaps, head gear, gloves and blade scabbards were purchased in March.

The Onan generator was operated in March to ensure operation was as designed. The unit was not in the best condition after the winter, particularly due to storage of acorns, pine cones, and other debris by squirrels and mice. The unit needed a thorough cleaning and some wire repair. The gravel floor of the shed needs to be replaced with a concrete floor to prevent burrowing critters from accessing the shed and generator. Numerous holes exist in the floor material, but the wooden structure seems secure from rodent access.